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ABSTRACT

Employing a metaphor of romantic relationship (e.g., monographic selections are like one-night stands; periodical selections are more like marriages), this paper assists the librarian in the selection of monographic periodicals for library music collections. It recommends finding existing titles through advertisements in other similar periodicals. Suggested selection criteria are: issues of quality, the reputation of the publisher, the contents of the periodical, the names of the contributors, and the publishing schedule of the periodical. Also recommended is looking at the factor of indexing by asking the question: "Is the title indexed and is the index in print or online form?" As an alternative method of acquisition, this paper suggests finding periodicals via interlibrary loan or document delivery if desired titles are available at nearby institutions. The reader is referred to several other sources for music periodical selection including: "Notes: The Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association"; "Magazines for Libraries'; "Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory"; and "The Serials Directory"; "International Music Journals"; and "Writing about Music." (JAK)

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ROMANCE IN A MINOR KEY: PERIODICALS SELECTION FOR MUSIC

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Selection of materials for music collections presents some interesting challenges. In addition to the usual books, music materials can include printed music, sound recordings and videos. Still, these classes of materials are most often monographic in nature. The selection decision is made, the materials are acquired, cataloged, processed and added to the collection, and the bibliographer need not think about the decision again (until weeding time arrives, that is.) But selection of periodicals is a bit different. To put it in the terms of romance, monographic selections are like a one-night stand, periodical selections are more like a marriage.

As in dating, in order to select periodicals, the bibliographer needs to know about availability. How does one meet eligible music periodicals? Just as singles who are looking to make a match place personal ads, advertisements for periodicals may be found in many music periodicals. Still one often may prefer to get better acquainted before making a commitment: a sample issue could fill the role of the first date. But one also makes new acquaintances through introductions.

While the Music Library Association has sponsored the publication of a new, third edition of *A Basic Music Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1997), this very worthwhile publication does not cover periodicals. Therefore, librarians looking for guidance in the selection of music periodicals may find recommendations from some other resources useful.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

Although music is a special discipline with its own problems and needs, many of the same criteria used in the selection decision for other fields will apply. Returning to our analogy, this selection process may be somewhat like getting engaged. Foremost among selection criteria is serving the needs of the users. In the case of a public library, this will include recreational interests of the population served as well as the desire to create a balanced collection. In an academic setting, the needs of the curriculum and faculty research are of primary importance. In fact, a bibliographer may be forced to subscribe to a periodical she may not have selected otherwise solely due to faculty demand. This is a bit like an arranged marriage.

Reputation is another important factor, whether one is talking about a periodical or a prospective partner. One can consider whether the title is refereed, what is known about the publisher and the editor or editorial board. Issues of quality are important, too, such as the editing and writing style, who the contributors are, what the features are (such as articles, news, letters), whether there are reviews of any kind (music journals might feature reviews of books, scores, recordings or any combination thereof), what the publishing schedule is and whether it is actually followed. Another factor is indexing: is the title indexed and is the index in print or on online form. Something else to consider is whether the title is easily available at a nearby institution, via interlibrary loan or by document delivery and if anticipated demand is such that these forms of access would be acceptable. (It's been said that a man won't buy a cow if he can get the milk for free). Finally, although in marriage dowries are not as common as they once were, for periodicals price will certainly be a consideration.

In this modern age of romance, some people have resorted to hiring private investigators in order to learn more about potential partners. Fortunately, for journal titles this information is often more easily obtained. For new periodical titles, the best single source is the semi-annual column "New Periodicals," currently authored by Suzanne Eggleston, which appears in *Notes: The Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* (Canton, Mass.: Music Library Association). This very useful column provides descriptions of new journal titles, detailing their objectives, formats and contents. It also reports on title and format changes, mergers and cessations.

Also helpful for current journal titles is *Magazines for Libraries* by Bill Katz, Linda Sternberg Katz. 8th ed. (New Providence, New Jersey : Bowker, 1995.) This volume provides a selective list arranged by subject. Entries provide a brief description of each title. A new edition is issued every few years; the most recent as of this writing contained almost 100 titles in music.

Periodical directories, such as *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory* (New York : Bowker) and *The Serials Directory* (Birmingham, Ala. : EBSCO) are issued annually. Arranged by subject, they provide far briefer information—in some cases just address and subscription price—for a larger number of titles.

For a retrospective approach, *International music journals*, edited by Linda M. Fidler and Richard S. James (New York : Greenwood Press, 1990) provides detailed information on the publication history and editorial approach of 170 music journals. *Writing about Music* by Ann P. Basart (Berkeley, Calif. : Fallen Leaf Press, 1989) provides descriptive information for over 430 music journals. While the approach here is intended for writers contributing to a journal, there is much valuable information on the editorial policy, articles and features of each journal.

Making decisions about periodicals in libraries can be particularly challenging. While inflation and inexorably rising subscription rates are nothing new, issues of electronic journals and full text online make the situation even more complicated today. Knowing where to look for information may help in the process.

And just as in marriage, no decision necessarily lasts until death do us part. The possibility of cancellation is always there.

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